

526 what dangerous game. But if you saw the selfsame
177 sport played without an umpire, and only a score
keeper, in Hunza, you'd probably think it the most
bloodthirsty game in creation. And who am I to say
it is or isn't!

Of course, the British changed the rules and regula-
tions somewhat along the line of the Marquis of
Queensbury, and a good thing, too, for our men aren't
quite as tough as the Hunzans.

526 Practically every village in Hunza has a polo team
628 and matches are being arranged continually . . . and
the day of a match is really a red letter day for that
village. The villagers may not have too much room for
orchards and other farming, but they do have polo
fields. Invariably the best and flattest piece of land in
the area is used as a polo field. So you see, sport, for
sport's sake, ranks high among the Hunzans and the
Nagirwals as well.

526 The polo field at Baltit sits just below the old castle
367 on the precipice and rather close to the school and the
mosque . . . a sort of towering civic square, if it might
be called that. A well-maintained low stone wall sur-
[417] rounds the polo field.

While putting in my attendance at the polo field this
day, I recalled that a few days previous I had followed
a trail that led down from a cleft in this polo field to
visit some of the Hunzan farms.

Above the raised wall, in places, are chairs and
seating spaces for the spectators.

526 Everybody goes to the polo matches. And why not?
[562] To these affairs even the women go. And even though
[291] their clothes be drab their red, skillfully embroidered
Hunzan hats make the spectacle glow with splendor
and color.

[533] The Hunzan band is there to do the honors and

they play from the time the game starts until it finishes. 526
I don't know who would be more tired . . . the musi- [533]
cians, the polo players or the excited, active, shouting
spectators.

I paced off the field and counted 90 good paces [367]
long and 40 wide. This would make it approximately
270 x 120 feet. This is quite a bit smaller in size than
the modern polo field which is 300 x 200 feet, and
would tend to make the Hunzan sport more hazardous
and nerve-racking.

Instead of goal posts they use two large white stones
at either end.

The game was started into action by the Mir, in [643]
this case, who started off at the further end at a gallop.
As he reached the center, he threw the ball high into
the air and as it came down he clobbered it and the
game—or the mad scramble—was on!

There are 6 players on each team and as the ball is
pummeled from one place to another, the screams of
the spectators and the players are more frenzied than
those heard at a baseball game.

There are no rules—except that the team who scores
9 goals first is the winner, and the game doesn't stop
until one of the teams has scored 9 goals. They don't
have rest periods; they don't change horses or men;
there are no penalties and no fouls. So you can just
imagine the carryings-on.

If the ball is struck or bounces off the wall and is
caught by one of the players, this permits him to ride
through the goal posts and deposit the ball and score a
goal . . . if the opposition will let him! Any means can
be and usually are undertaken to prevent him from
reaching the goal to which he is entitled to proceed. If
they're bold enough and strong enough, they can even
pull him from his mount.

Habits and Customs.

75

D
302 the top of the head for a space 2 inches broad in front, tapering to half an inch behind. Those who cannot boast of long locks, dress their hair into numerous small cork-screw ringlets all round the head.¹ On the approach of middle age the whole head is shaved, according to the orthodox Mahommedani fashion, and the beard is allowed to grow. In Chitral the effect of the long-flowing locks reaching to the waist is often extremely picturesque.

D
576 The mode of salutation between equals, on meeting after a prolonged absence, is graceful and pleasing. After clasping each other, first on one side then on the other, hands are joined, and each person in turn kisses the hand of the other. Superiors are greeted either by kissing the hand or touching the foot, both at meeting and parting. In Chitral, when the meeting is between two of unequal rank, the inferior kisses the hand of the superior, who in return kisses the former on the cheek. A similar practice is said to have existed among the ancient Persians.²

D
644 B
644 On the occasion of the visit of one chief to another, a rather curious ceremony called "Kobah" takes place. On arrival, the visitor is conducted to the Shawaran,³ and the followers of both chiefs show their dexterity in firing at a mark set up on a tall pole, from horseback while galloping at speed. After this a bullock is led out before the guest, who draws his sword and does his best to cut its head off at a single blow, or deputes one of his followers to do so, and the carcase is given to his retinue. The custom exists in Shighnan, Badakhshan, Wakhan, Chitral, Yassin, Gilgit, Hunza, and Nager. In the latter place it is customary to slay the bullock with bow and arrow. Of late years the practice has become somewhat modified owing to the strict observance of Mahommedan customs, and it is more usual to give over the bullock alive to the guest, so that its throat may be cut in a more orthodox fashion; but occasionally a chief wishing to show off the strength of his arm and the temper of his blade, will adhere to the old custom.

B
595 Polygamy is of course practised, and the right of divorce is somewhat wantonly exercised. The marriage of very young children is not common, though occasionally practised. Girls are generally married between the ages of ten and four-

¹ Rawlinson mentions this as an ancient Persian fashion.—*Ancient Monarchies*, Vol. IV.

² Strabo Book XV., Chapter 3, Section 20.

³ The Shawaran answers all the purposes of the village green in England, being used for all gatherings and games.